

# STARK, MILLER INTRODUCE HISTORIC PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE LEGISLATION

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WASHINGTON- Representatives Pete Stark (D-CA), George Miller (D-CA), Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) and Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) today introduced landmark legislation to provide workers with 12 weeks of paid leave in order to care for a new child, a sick family member, recover from an illness, or because of an exigency arising from the deployment of a member of the armed services. The "Family Leave Insurance Act of 2008" will provide families with the support and flexibility they need and businesses with improved productivity and employee morale.

"We hear a lot of talk about family values in Washington," said Stark. "It is time for Congress to stop just talking about family values and take action that families will actually value. The Family and Medical Leave Act has been a tremendous success, but many workers cannot afford to take unpaid leave. To make the offer real, the U.S. should take the next step by providing paid leave to all workers. I am proud to join fellow Representatives Miller, Woolsey, and Maloney in introducing legislation that, if passed, will mean healthier children, stronger families, and more competitive businesses."

"While millions of workers have taken advantage of the Family and Medical Leave Act, millions more are put in the impossible position of choosing between paying their bills and dealing with an illness or welcoming a new child to the family. Americans shouldn't have to make that choice," said Rep. George Miller, chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee. "Family-friendly policies like guaranteed paid leave not only help parents balance work and family, but also improve employers' bottom lines. When workers have the ability to take advantage of these family-friendly policies, their employers benefit from increased recruitment and retention rates, decreased absenteeism and improved productivity."

"Adopting paid leave nationwide would make our nation more family-friendly and benefit employers as well as families," said National Partnership for Women & Families President Debra L. Ness. "Too many workers cannot afford to take the unpaid leave the Family & Medical Leave Act provides. We are enormously grateful to Representatives Carolyn Maloney, George Miller, Pete Stark and Lynn Woolsey for championing paid leave in the House, as Christopher Dodd and Ted Stevens are doing in the Senate. These bills deserve quick action. Paid leave is working well in California, and it will work well nationwide too."

"Ever since California became the first state to enact a paid family leave law in 2004, we've seen how paid family leave has greatly benefited California's working families," said Art Pulaski, executive secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation. "No American should be forced to make the impossible choice between work and family, and if this law passes, no one will have to."

This legislation has been endorsed by the ALF-CIO, the National Partnership for Women and Families, the California Labor Federation, First Focus, Voices for America's Children, and the National Employment Law Project.

The legislation will:

Provide all workers with 12 weeks of paid leave over a 12-month period to care for a new child, provide for an ill family member, treat their own illness, or deal with an exigency caused by the deployment of a member of the military;

Provide these benefits through a new trust fund that is financed equally by employers and employees, who will each contribute 0.2% of the employee's pay;

Progressively tier the benefits so that a low wage worker (earning less than \$30,000) will receive full or near full salary replacement, middle income workers (\$30,000- \$60,000) receive 55% wage replacement, and higher earners (over \$60,000) receive 40-45%, with the benefit capped at approximately \$800 per week;

Administer the program through the Department of Labor which will contract with states to administer the program (similar to how the Unemployment Insurance program is run);

Allow states and businesses with materially equivalent or better benefits to opt-out of the program.

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